

PRODUCE DEPARTMENT: REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1912.

SIR,—

Westminster Chambers, 13 Victoria Street, London S.W., 6th May, 1912.

I beg to submit herewith a report on the work done by the Produce Department during the past twelve months.

Throughout the year there has been a gradual enlargement in the number and variety of matters requiring attention. Not only has constant touch been maintained with the many markets on which the produce of the Dominion has been handled in order to gauge accurately their condition, but careful watch has been necessary in order to be in a position to give reliable quotations as to the value of the numerous lines in which producers in New Zealand are interested. The cables despatched each week to Wellington have dealt with such varied lines as mutton, lamb, beef, butter, cheese, hemp, wool, wheat, oats, beans, peas, cocksfoot, hops, kauri-gum, poultry, eggs, bacon, hams, &c. These cables have given full information concerning the lines enumerated, and, as far as could be done, they have been prepared in a manner which made it possible, by reading each succeeding cable with that preceding, to obtain a connected, continuous report of the several markets concerned.

General correspondence with firms in all parts of the United Kingdom has shown a decided growth, while an increasing number of inquiries of one sort or another have been received from foreign countries, including France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, the United States, Japan, the Argentine, &c. In many instances these traders have desired to open up business with New Zealand houses as agents, or to extend their connection with the Dominion; and where it was not possible to place them in direct touch with suitable firms, their requirements have been notified to the Department in Wellington for registration and attention. A large amount of correspondence with Government Departments, Chambers of Commerce, &c., have also taken place during the year; and in several instances inquiries have been received direct from New Zealand merchants and others, and the desired information furnished accordingly.

As indicated last year, the increase in the general work necessitated my requesting further clerical assistance, which was duly granted, and my former assistant has been promoted to the vacancy caused by the transference of Mr. R. H. Hooper to Wellington. With the present staff, therefore, it has been found possible to cope adequately with all phases of the work, which I am pleased to be able to state is now quite up to date in every respect.

As in previous years, cabled advices of shipments of produce from the Dominion to this country were received from the Agriculture and Commerce Department at Wellington, and it has been my practice to send out regular weekly statements of these to merchants and the trades interested. This speeding-up and regularizing of the issue of the statements and the Statistical Products Export leaflets has doubtless proved of advantage to all concerned, and I am glad to note that the Department has responded to the request for prompt, steady cables, as they are undoubtedly looked for each week by those interested.

The distribution of the *New Zealand Farmer* has also been continued by the Government, and copies are regularly sent to libraries and reading-rooms in farming and agricultural districts all over the Kingdom.

The three pamphlets dealing with New Zealand meat have been brought up to date, and reset with new photographs; several thousands were distributed during the year, chiefly to butchers and small salesmen in various parts. Recently some interesting details of experiments with frozen meat have appeared in the Press, and these have been carefully noted for inclusion in future issues of the "Hospital" booklet.

During the year I have attended as often as possible at the meetings of the Association Internationale du Froid, and in December last went over to Paris for the purpose. My membership of the Cold-storage Association and the Incorporated Society of Meat Importers has also been maintained. I am thus able to keep in close contact with their work, and to get first-hand information of anything of interest. I also attended the annual meeting of the National Sheep-breeders' Conference, held at Norwich in June last, as the New Zealand representative. The meeting, unfortunately, from the point of view of attendance, was not a success, although the paper read by Mr. John Cook on "Supplies of Mutton and Wool to the United Kingdom from Outside Sources" was an excellent one. Copies of the proceedings and paper have been duly forwarded to the Dominion. Mention should be made of the fact that much regret was expressed when it was learned that the Hon. T. Mackenzie found it impossible to attend the Conference and read a paper, as had been hoped.

I have also found it possible in my spare time to deliver several lectures on New Zealand in different centres, and am pleased to state that the results have been encouraging. I have taken a plentiful supply of lantern-slides with me to illustrate my remarks, and considerable interest has been aroused, which should be of benefit to the Dominion. One recently arranged at the request of the Victoria League was given by me at Poulton, Gloucestershire. The audience consisted chiefly of farmers and farm labourers, and the "hall" hired for the purpose was the large barn of a local farmer! From this you will readily understand that the right classes of people are being reached.

So much for the general work undertaken during the period, and I will now review the principal features in connection with the produce trade of the Dominion during the twelvemonth.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

The year 1911 has proved in many ways to have been a remarkable one in the history of the United Kingdom, and on looking back the soundness of the general trade must be noted with satisfaction. Several events have occurred which might have been expected to have seriously interfered with the course of business, but, on the whole, their effects have not, fortunately, been